

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 SAB-02 /070 W

-----050646Z 002265 /14

R 041953Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1749

INFO PANCANAL

USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, PN

SUBJECT: MAY DAY PASSES

1. MAY DAY 1977 PASSED WITHOUT MUCH BROUHAHA. PLANS FOR EXTENSIVE ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED BY THE UMBRELLA NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LABOR (CONATO) REPORTEDLY FELL THROUGH WHEN THE MINISTRY OF LABOR CAME UP WITH TOO LITTLE MONEY.

2. INSTEAD OF A SINGLE MASSIVE NATIONAL RALLY, SEPARATE RALLIES WERE PLANNED FOR PANAMA CITY, COLON AND SEVERAL CITIES IN THE INTERIOR. EACH FEATURED A LABOR LEADER PLUS GOP AND NATIONAL GUARD SPEAKERS. THE RALLIES CAME OFF, BUT WERE MOSTLY POORLY ATTENDED AND UNENTHUSIASTIC.

3. A LOCAL RADIO/TV REPORT BRANDED THE RALLY IN COLON A "RESOUNDING FAILURE" WHEN LESS THAN 200 WORKERS SHOWED UP (FBIS/PANAMA PA 021539Y). MOST OTHERS WERE ONLY BARELY MORE SUCCESSFUL, AND SPEECHES WERE STANDARD POTBOILERS.

4. THE LOCAL PRESS BLOSSOMED LAST WEEK WITH THE USUAL MAY DAY SPATE OF TRIBUTES TO THE PANAMANIAN WORKER FROM BUSINESS,
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GOVERNMENT AND LABOR ORGANIZATIONS--BUT EVEN THIS COVERAGE WAS FAR MORE RESTRAINED THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS. PRESS FOR MAY 3 (PAPERS DID NOT PUBLISH MAY 2 DUE TO HOLIDAY) VIRTUALLY IGNORED THE FACT THAT MAY DAY EVER HAPPENED. MAY 4 PAPERS PRINTED RATHER ANODYNE SPEECH BY MINISTER OF EDUCATION ROYO TO RALLY IN PUERTO ARMUELLES, CHIRIQUI.

5. COMMENT: THE REASON FOR THIS BLAH MAY DAY IS NOT FAR TO
SEEK. ABOUT THE ONLY THINGS THAT PANAMANIAN ORGANIZED LABOR
CAN GENERATE ANY ENTHUSIASM ABOUT AT THIS TIME ARE: ABOLITION
OF LAW 95 (WHICH AMENDED THE LABOR CODE TO LABOR'S DISADVANTAGE
IN JANUARY); COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE HIGH COST OF LIVING AND
UNEMPLOYMENT. THE GOVERNMENT MADE IT CLEAR IT WAS NOT
PREPARED TO HEAR MUCH ON THESE SUBJECTS. MAY DAY'S DULL THUD
THIS YEAR IS AMPLE EVIDENCE THAT: 1) ORGANIZED LABOR IS NOT
PREPARED TO OPENLY CHALLENGE THE GOP OVER ITS ECONOMIC AND LABOR
POLICIES, AND 2) IT TOLERATES THE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THERE IS
LITTLE ELSE IT CAN DO.

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Message Attributes

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